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# Security Council

Fifty-ninth year

*Provisional*

**5019**th meeting

Wednesday, 11 August 2004, 10 a.m.

New York

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| *President:* | Mr. Denisov | (Russian Federation) |
| *Members:* | Algeria | Mr. Benmehidi |
| | Angola | Mr. Lucas |
| | Benin | Mr. Adechi |
| | Brazil | Mr. Tarrisse da Fontoura |
| | Chile | Mr. Maquieira |
| | China | Mr. Li Jinhua |
| | France | Mr. Duclos |
| | Germany | Mr. Trautwein |
| | Pakistan | Mr. Akram |
| | Philippines | Mr. Baja |
| | Romania | Mr. Motoc |
| | Spain | Mr. De Palacio España |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sir Emyr Jones Parry |
| | United States of America | Mrs. Patterson |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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04-45614 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question**

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At today's meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to whom I give the floor.

**Mr. Prendergast**: I regret to report that since the Secretariat's most recent briefing to the Council, on 13 July (see S/PV.5002), there has been no tangible progress towards resuming the peace process in the Middle East, and violence has continued to claim innocent lives.

Neither side has taken adequate steps to protect civilians, and both are in breach of their international legal obligations. Israel, as the occupying Power, has obligations to protect Palestinian civilians and not to destroy their property unless this is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations. Palestinian civilians continue to fall victim in Israeli military operations. The scale of destruction of Palestinian property by the Israeli military raises concerns about collective punishment. For its part, the Palestinian Authority has obligations under agreements reached with Israel, under international humanitarian law and in accordance with its commitments under the road map to protect Israeli civilians from attacks emanating from territories in its control. It has failed to live up to those obligations, and Israeli civilians continue to suffer attacks from Palestinians, most recently in the form of Qassam rockets. For each side to cite the actions of the other does not in any way excuse it from fulfilling its own obligations. There can be no preconditions to the observance of humanitarian law and international agreements.

Over the past month, 54 Palestinians have been killed and 400 Palestinians and 23 Israelis injured. Since September 2000, 3,553 Palestinians and 949 Israelis have been killed. This brings the total number of Palestinian casualties since the eruption of the intifada to 34,770 and the total number of Israeli casualties to 6,102.

A new and worrying pattern has recently been emerging: Palestinian militants launch Qassam rockets into Israel, followed by Israeli helicopter missile strikes into the Gaza Strip and ever-deeper incursions into areas adjacent to Israel. The northern Gaza Strip was the focus of a large-scale Israeli operation — operation Forward Shield — around the city of Beit Hanoun, which began on 29 June in the wake of a deadly Qassam attack on Sderot. Israeli troops have now been redeployed to the fringes of the city, but many areas of Beit Hanoun remain under a complete siege after the operation was extended not only into the centre of the city but also, just prior to the redeployment, towards the Jabalya refugee camp between Beit Hanoun and Gaza City. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 19 people have been killed and 140 injured in the operation to date.

During the current reporting period, more than 60 rockets have been launched from Beit Hanoun at Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip, causing injury and property damage. On 21 July, a Qassam rocket fired from the Beit Hanoun area landed in the bedroom of a house in a kibbutz in the western Negev, where a mother and two children were sleeping. Fortunately — and remarkably — there were no injuries. A number of rockets landed in the Israeli town of Sderot on 29 July, this time injuring nine residents. In our most recent briefing, we informed the Council of the deaths in Sderot, including that of a child, that resulted from rocket strikes. While no deaths have resulted from the current wave of rocket attacks, the increasing number of them is worrying and is a real danger to civilians. Including the attacks to which I referred, as of 6 August, the United Nations has recorded a total of 106 attacks from the Gaza Strip during the same period, approximately 90 per cent of which would have been from Qassam rockets, with the remaining 10 per cent being mortar attacks. We call on the Palestinian

Authority to take all steps necessary to bring those attacks to a halt.

Access to Beit Hanoun was restricted to just one route, and all entry and exit required prior coordination with the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), resulting in shortages of water, food and medical supplies in some areas. After protests from the international community, including public statements by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme, and interventions by the Europeans, Americans and the Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, an IDF redeployment from those areas and from most of Beit Hanoun started at 1 a.m. on Thursday, 5 August.

According to UNRWA and OCHA, as of 6 August, 20 houses had been destroyed and 230 had been partially damaged, 6 wells had been damaged and 15 factories had been destroyed. Even as Israel strives to increase its security from attacks from the Gaza Strip, it must act in keeping with its international humanitarian law obligations. Israel must protect Palestinian civilians and their property by carrying out operations in a manner that is proportionate to the threat that it is trying to alleviate.

According to the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator, there have been five incidents during operation Forward Shield in which, despite prior coordination, the IDF fired on areas where United Nations staff were present, and two incidents in which the IDF refused to allow United Nations staff caught in an exchange of fire at Erez to move to safety. Furthermore, prior to operation Forward Shield there had been three other incidents in which United Nations staff were trapped in crossfire at Erez: on 23 March, 15 April and 12 May 2004. From January to June this year, there were 44 recorded incidents in which United Nations buildings or installations were fired upon by Israeli security forces while United Nations staff were in them. We are deeply concerned about the unacceptably high number of security incidents involving United Nations staff that have been caused by IDF action over the past few weeks. Israel has an obligation to protect humanitarian workers and to facilitate their efforts.

On 21 July, against a background of ongoing Israeli military operations and increasing internal unrest, the Designated Official — UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen — raised the United Nations security phase rating to phase 4, which requires the movement of most international staff out of the Gaza Strip. On 5 August, UNRWA relocated all remaining international staff except the office staff of the Commissioner-General and his Deputy. I am sure that the Council will understand our concerns for their security and with regard to the restrictions imposed on their work, both by Israeli military operations and by increased internal unrest in the Palestinian Authority.

An especially worrying phenomenon has been the number of children directly harmed by the ongoing violence. On 29 July, a 12-year-old Palestinian was shot dead and seven others — including three children — were wounded as Israeli troops fired on a funeral procession in the southern Gaza Strip. A few days earlier, on 26 July, a 12-year-old girl was shot from an IDF watchtower while she was playing soccer in an outlying neighbourhood of the Gaza Strip town of Khan Younis. She died on the way to hospital. A 16-year-old Palestinian was killed by gunfire while standing at the window of his home in Beit Hanoun on 24 July. On 4 August, five Palestinians — including a 10-year-old boy — were killed in separate incidents in the West Bank and in Gaza. According to Palestinian sources, a 14-year-old Palestinian was killed in Beit Lahiya while sitting at home. In Rafah, one Palestinian was killed and five were injured in similar situations.

During the past month, Israel carried out extrajudicial killings. On 19 July, Israel wounded a total of five militants in two separate missile strikes on a safe house in the Shati refugee camp, near Gaza City. Three days later, another helicopter missile strike in Gaza killed a senior Islamic Jihad operative, his aide and a third Palestinian. Then a third missile strike, on 29 July, killed two militants in Rafah. We again call on Israel to cease this illegal practice.

Search and arrest campaigns throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have continued with unaltered frequency and have at times been stepped up. The almost-daily operations saw the detention of more than 130 people between 14 July and 5 August.

Curfews continued to be imposed in many Palestinian towns and villages. In the Gaza Strip, movement and access remain severely restricted, especially in the northern area affected by the ongoing operation around Beit Hanoun. Numerous flying checkpoints were erected throughout all districts of the

Palestinian territory. Jericho remains a closed military zone. On 21 July, Israel permitted the entrance of basic supplies to the city for the first time in 11 days. The northern districts of Tulkarem, Qalqiliya and Salfit were also severely affected by the frequent establishment of flying checkpoints between 23 and 26 July.

The closure of the Rafah crossing to Egypt caused increased hardship to more than 3,500 Palestinians stranded on the Egyptian side. That sole point of passage for Palestinians travelling anywhere outside the Gaza Strip was closed for 19 days as Israel maintained that it had solid information that terrorists were digging a tunnel underneath the crossing and that they planned to rig it with explosives. Civilians — including hundreds of children and elderly persons — had to sleep on the floor in the terminal from 17 July onwards, in temperatures ranging from 30 to 40 degrees Celsius, assisted by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Israel reopened the crossing on 6 August.

During the past month, Israel continued demolishing Palestinian houses despite repeated calls by the international community to halt that practice. As I mentioned earlier, in Beit Hanoun alone, in the course of operation Forward Shield, some 20 houses were completely demolished and another 230 damaged. Similar demolitions continued to take place during IDF military operations in the Rafah and Khan Younis refugee camps. For example, in the northern West Bank, the village of Azzun Atmeh received 25 demolition orders, and 11 houses were demolished there on 4 August. During the reporting period, the Israeli Government continued the practice of demolishing the homes of the families of persons connected to suicide-bombing attacks. Such punitive demolitions affecting persons not charged with a crime are a form of collective punishment.

It has been stated in this Chamber many times before that the continuing violence on the ground comes as a direct consequence of occupation and the absence of any real hope of progress towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute through negotiations. The Secretary-General and his representatives have pointed out, also many times, that the Quartet's road map for peace — which the Council endorsed in its resolution 1515 (2003) — represents a realistic and viable way to move out of the current hopeless situation and to resume political dialogue. However, both parties have failed to meet their minimum obligations under the road map.

As we have been saying consistently over the past 12 months, the Palestinian Authority, despite promises by its President, has made no progress on its core obligation to take immediate action on the ground to end violence and to combat terror. The Israeli Government, despite its commitment, has made no progress on its core obligation immediately to dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001 and to move towards a complete freeze of settlement activities. Until and unless both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel take the necessary first steps to restore momentum towards peace, the stalemate will continue and there will be no lasting ceasefire. Those first steps are clear: on the Palestinian side, implement meaningful security reforms and bring to an end the use of violence in all its forms; and, on the Israeli side, dismantle settlement outposts and implement a full freeze of all settlement activities. I am sorry to say that, so far, there has been little reason to believe that we are about to witness the taking of such steps by either side, let alone both sides.

Progress on the implementation of Palestinian reform continues to be slow and mostly cosmetic. That cannot be explained other than by a lack of political will to advance along that road. In his July briefing to the Council, Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, warned against what he described as emerging chaos in Palestinian areas. Mr. Roed-Larsen — a veteran of the Middle East peace process, an impartial observer representing the Secretary-General and a friend of both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples — has a duty to remind the parties of their obligations under the provisions of international law, signed agreements and the road map. He also has the duty to draw attention to the challenges that could hamper the efforts of the international community to restart the peace process. I would suggest that in the response to those warnings and challenges, the focus should be on the message, not on the messenger.

As Mr. Roed-Larsen pointed out in last month's briefing, demands for Palestinian Authority reform come not solely from the Quartet, but also from the Palestinian people. The stalling on much-needed reforms and the lack of responsiveness from the

Palestinian Authority to internal demands have led to an outbreak of protests and to a real danger of chaos.

Indeed, on 17 July, Prime Minister Qurei submitted his resignation, citing as a reason the state of unprecedented chaos. President Arafat announced a series of security measures to prevent further deterioration, including the appointment of the chief of military intelligence as head of national security forces and the appointment of a new police chief in Gaza. However, those measures led to further unrest as thousands took to the streets in Gaza City in protest. The demonstrations continued on 18 July and involved clashes among various factions of Fatah. An angry crowd attacked the headquarters of Palestinian military intelligence in Rafah. In Khan Younis, a group of armed Palestinians attacked the headquarters of military intelligence, seized weapons and ransacked the building, after which they set it on fire. Meanwhile, unknown gunmen shot Nabil Amr — a former Palestinian information minister and a well-known critic of the Palestinian Authority's very limited steps on reform — in his house in Ramallah on 20 July. He survived the attack but was badly injured.

After that attack, manifestations of unrest, popular discontent and chaos increased. Finally, political mediation, notably by a group of Palestinian Legislative Council members, led to an agreement by which President Arafat agreed to grant Prime Minister Qurei — Abu Ala — full authority over the security agencies, which are currently under the authority of the Minister of the Interior, and to abide by the Basic Law as far as the powers of the Prime Minister are concerned. On 27 July, Abu Ala retracted his resignation. However, despite those developments, ultimate authority and control over all Palestinian Authority security agencies remain with the National Security Council, headed by President Arafat.

Unrest continued, and on 30 July Fatah gunmen kidnapped three foreigners as they were returning to their home in Nablus. The three were released unharmed two hours later. Palestinian security sources announced on 31 July that an attempt to assassinate Prime Minister Qurei had been thwarted. On the same day, gunmen belonging to the Al-Aqsa Brigades torched the offices of the Palestinian Authority General Intelligence Force in Jenin. On 1 August, unknown gunmen opened fire to break up a Fatah meeting calling for internal elections. The following day, two Palestinians convicted of collaborating with Israel were killed by unknown gunmen. The two killed had been among the seven Palestinians wounded earlier when a Palestinian Authority policeman allegedly threw two hand grenades into the prison cell of inmates suspected of collaborating with Israel. In Nablus, unidentified gunmen fired several shots at the home of former mayor Ghassan Shaka'a, who had resigned two months earlier in protest at the emerging chaos in the city.

The Minister of the Interior has taken some measures to reorganize the police force. However, Israel has reportedly retracted its earlier consent to his request to permit the Palestinian police to start carrying weapons inside Palestinian cities on 6 August. Israel's cooperation to facilitate any steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to reform its security forces is of vital importance.

Meanwhile, the security measures taken by the Palestinian Authority are still limited and unclear. The announced intention of President Arafat to regroup security services from nine into three, as required by the road map, is welcome. However, that has yet to be reflected in real change on the ground. Over the past 12 months, we have been consistently calling on President Arafat to take decisive action to reform, refocus and rehabilitate the Palestinian security services. Decisive action in that regard would help to restore law and order as well as the Palestinian Authority's diminished credibility. The required elements of reform are clear to all: the consolidation of all security services into three main bodies, with a professional leadership; and putting them under the authority of an effective Interior Minister who reports to an empowered Prime Minister.

Another area where reform is needed is elections. Concerns remain in the international community that Palestinian Authority preparations for local elections must meet international standards to be deemed free and fair, especially as regards giving the Central Elections Commission a mandate to conduct voter registration.

Israel too has failed to implement its core commitments under the road map. Settlement expansion and lack of action on removing the outposts erected since 2001 severely undermine Palestinian trust in Israel's intentions and contributes to strengthening hardliners among Palestinians. Despite repeated promises by the Israeli Government, settlement activities continue. According to recent figures of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior, the settler population

continues to increase. Substantial growth in those settlements slated for evacuation under the Israeli disengagement plan is particularly worrying.

Settlement construction is reported to have continued at a considerable pace, in particular in the large settlement blocs such as Gush Etzion and Maale Adumim. In and around East Jerusalem, recent settlement activity, both governmental and privately sponsored, has proceeded at a rate that observers have described as unmatched since 1992. Most private settlement activity proceeds along the route of the barrier in a way that could turn the barrier into a border.

Government-sponsored settlement activity, as along the land bridge connecting Jerusalem and Maale Adumim under the controversial E-1 plan, would have serious effects on the territorial contiguity of the Palestinian territory, resulting in the creation of two more or less completely separated Palestinian cantons in the West Bank. Thus, reports that the Israeli Government had approved plans for the construction of 600 new accommodation units in Maale Adumim, already the largest Israeli settlement, and in other areas, were of special concern. While we welcome Prime Minister Sharon's instructions to halt and re-examine tenders for construction in those settlements, what we are looking for is a comprehensive and sustained freeze on settlement activities, as is called for by the road map.

On 20 July, the General Assembly adopted a resolution (resolution ES-10/15) that acknowledged the advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice in The Hague on Israel's barrier, demanded that Israel comply with its legal obligations and called on Member States to comply as well. The General Assembly also called on both parties to implement their obligations under the road map and requested Switzerland to consult and report with regard to the resumption of the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. In addition, the resolution asked the Secretary-General to establish a register of damage.

The Secretary-General has called on the Government of Israel to abide by its legal obligations. The Secretariat is currently studying how best to carry out the task entrusted to it by the General Assembly. I expect that we shall have more to report on the barrier next month.

Meanwhile, there have been disturbing reports warning of possible attacks on Muslim Holy Sites in Jerusalem by Jewish extremists. On 24 July, Israel's Public Security Minister publicly confirmed that the security establishment had identified an increased intent among right-wing extremists to carry out an attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque. Israeli officials were insistent that due to the existing stringent security routines, extremists planning an attack would find it difficult to penetrate the site.

Nevertheless, it needs to be emphasized that, whether in Jerusalem or elsewhere, whether Muslim or Jewish or Christian, the safety and sanctity of all religious sites is of primary importance, in normal times as well as in a situation marked by violence, mistrust and hostility. Israel has an indisputable obligation towards its own citizens and towards the international community to ensure the full protection of all sites currently under its control. We therefore call on the Government of Israel to take effective measures against those involved in the planning or the incitement of acts aimed at undermining the safety or the sanctity of those Holy Sites.

Prime Minister Sharon's initiative to withdraw the Israeli armed forces from Gaza and parts of the West Bank and to evacuate all settlements in the Gaza Strip, as well as four settlements in the northern West Bank, is gaining momentum within Israel. Despite vocal opposition from segments of the settler community, recent polls show that 60 per cent of Israelis continue to support the disengagement initiative.

The Quartet's position is clear: a withdrawal should be full and complete; it should lead to an end of the occupation of Gaza and be accompanied by similar steps in the West Bank; it should take place within the framework of the road map and the vision of two States; and it should be fully coordinated with the Palestinian Authority and the Quartet. A withdrawal on that basis would create new opportunities for progress towards peace. It would be a significant landmark in the history of peacemaking between Israelis and Palestinians. It is our hope that both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides will focus on the tasks at hand in order to make withdrawal and its aftermath a new beginning of the peace process, and not a new low point in the long history of their conflict.

As we have stated many times before, the requirements for the success of the withdrawal initiative are the very same requirements as for the successful implementation of the road map. The United Nations and the international community at large are ready to assist the parties in that endeavour if they make the right choices. The Quartet principals are planning to meet here in September to assess the situation on the ground and examine appropriate courses of action.

The main donor coordination body, known as the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, will also meet in September in New York to examine ways in which the donor community could assist the parties to turn the withdrawal into a true beginning of a genuine peace process. But yet again, it all depends on the parties themselves — the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority — and the choices they make in that regard.

On the economic front, I have to say that the picture remains grim. The Palestinian economy is in tatters, and it stands little chance of recovery unless immediate action is taken. This quarter is the third in a row in which Palestinian unemployment has increased. The total unemployment rate stands at 34.3 per cent. Total Palestinian Authority revenues continue to be far below expenditure levels. Recently released figures show a $38 million budget deficit in May.

A recent World Bank study found that the deep economic crisis in the West Bank and Gaza is one of the worst recessions in modern history. It is contributing to the impoverishment of an entire generation of young Palestinians as well as to the undermining of the credibility of the Palestinian Authority. And, inevitably, it is increasing the popular appeal of militant factions. The primary cause of this crisis is the closure regime imposed by the Government of Israel. Without a significant change in the closure regime, the Palestinian economy will not be revived. Indeed, the World Bank has emphasized that Israel's disengagement plan will have limited impact on the Palestinian economy and Palestinian livelihoods if it is not accompanied by a radical easing of closure that encompasses three elements: the removal of internal obstacles to movement in the West Bank, the opening of Palestinian external borders to commodity trade and a return to a reasonable flow of Palestinian labour into Israel.

If those conditions are met, additional donor money can be raised. But donors need some assurance that their contributions will have a productive impact. Aid will be provided in the context of a successful comprehensive Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank as a first step in the implementation of the road map.

It is particularly disquieting that Israel has announced its intention to phase out completely Palestinian employment inside Israel by 2008. Already, the number of Palestinians from the West Bank employed in Israel, Israeli settlements and Israeli industrial zones dropped from 50,000 to 48,000 during the second quarter of 2004. The number of Gazans working in Israel, Israeli settlements and industrial zones fell from 6,000 to less than 500 from the first to the second quarter of 2004, according to recent data. The number of trucks importing and exporting goods from and to Gaza has declined significantly. Truckloads leaving Gaza fell by 70 per cent from April to May 2004, and truckloads entering Gaza declined by 30 per cent over the same period.

The Palestinian economy is dependent on the Israeli economy not only for employment but also for raw materials and trade. Although the parties themselves may choose to change that relationship in the long term, a revival of the Palestinian economy in the short term depends on a return to reasonable levels of Palestinian employment in Israel.

Should Israel insist on ending Palestinian employment and should it implement the disengagement plan without accompanying measures to ease internal and external closure, unemployment and poverty will continue to soar among Palestinians, with one certain outcome: more popular support for militant groups and an ever weaker Palestinian Authority that will not be able to maintain law and order.

Let me now turn to the situation between Israel and Lebanon. As the Council is aware from the addendum to the 21 July report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (S/2004/572/Add.1), there was a grave breach of the ceasefire on 20 July. Along the western sector of the Blue Line, sniper fire from Lebanese territory, allegedly by Hizbullah sharpshooters, resulted in the death of two Israeli soldiers in an IDF outpost. The retaliation by the Israel Defence Forces included tank fire and missiles launched from helicopters at

Hizbullah positions. A tank round killed a Hizbullah militant. That evening, Israeli jets overflew Lebanon, breaking the sound barrier with low-flying incursions over Beirut and other parts of the country. As would be expected, those violations contributed to the tension and generated a great deal of anxiety among Lebanese civilians.

Given the tense atmosphere both along the Blue Line and in Lebanon in general due to that series of incidents, I am pleased to report that the coordinated and complementary interventions of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), United Nations senior representatives and several Security Council member States contributed to reducing tensions and avoiding further deterioration. The period since then has been generally calm, including a noticeable reduction in the number of air violations. However, on 9 August, Israeli air violations of Lebanese airspace resumed.

The incidents of 20 July demonstrate the speed with which escalation can occur. Maximum restraint by all parties is essential if we are to avoid dangerous consequences.

Unfortunately, I cannot say that any progress has been achieved on the Syrian-Israeli track. It is of considerable importance, given the regional situation, that Israel and Syria should resume their suspended peace negotiations aimed at implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to thank you and the other members of the Council for your patience with what has been a long briefing. The tone and content of the briefing has become depressingly familiar to us all.

My colleague Terje Roed-Larsen has often reminded us that despair and pessimism are the enemies of any peace process. I agree. While much of the focus of this month's briefing was on the obligations of the parties and, in most cases, their failure to meet those obligations, we in the international community have obligations too. One of the most basic of them is for us not to abandon ourselves to cynicism or despair. For the sake of the parties, Israelis and Palestinians alike, all of us must uphold the vision of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, based on the resolutions of the Council, which would bring an end to occupation and bring about two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. While the daily toll of violence, the injustice and the indignities of occupation may make that vision appear hopelessly utopian, it would in fact only become truly unattainable if we were to lose our commitment to its attainment.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Prendergast for his comprehensive briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

*The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.*